

Updated as of April 19, 2012

OSRTI Lead: Tracy Hopkins Regional POC: Joe Vranka/Sara Sparks

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Check one: ☐ Monthly Update ☒ Quarterly Update

Other related fact sheets? ☐ yes ☒ no

Current “Hot” Issue(s):

- Dr. John W. Ray, a local citizen and university professor, send a March 19, 2012 email to multiple EPA addresses requesting that EPA reconsider the 2006 Butte Priority Soils Operable Unit (BPSOU) Record of Decision.
- His request stems from a doctoral dissertation by Dr. Stacie Barry, which is a historical review of the mining industry and its contamination effects in Butte, Montana.
- The dissertation criticizes EPA’s risk assessment process and cleanup decision made in the 2006 BPSOU ROD. It also examines cancer rates and other public health information for Butte, Montana.
- EPA was not contacted or consulted about the dissertation content nor offered any opportunity to review the report prior to submittal to the Butte-Silver Bow County Board of Health.

Current EPA Activities:

- Region 8 (Montana Office Director, Julie DalSoglio) submitted a letter to the editor of the Montana Standard newspaper in Butte, Montana, on April 1, 2012. It summarizes EPA’s ongoing work at the site, continued evaluation of public health conditions, and consideration of Dr. Barry’s report. [http://mtstandard.com/news/opinion/columnists/epa-committed-to-butte-cleanup/article\\_1edd6c38-7bd8-11e1-af63-0019bb2963f4.html](http://mtstandard.com/news/opinion/columnists/epa-committed-to-butte-cleanup/article_1edd6c38-7bd8-11e1-af63-0019bb2963f4.html)
- Region 8 has requested assistance from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to address public health concerns raised in the Dr. Stacie Barry dissertation.
- Region 8 has drafted a response to Dr. John W. Ray that is expected to go out in April 2012.

Site History:

- More than 100 years of mining have resulted in the development of over 500 underground mines (with roughly 3,000 miles of underground workings) and 4 open pit mines including the Berkeley Pit with its ancillary tailings ponds, waste dumps, and acid leach pads. Operation of silver mills and copper and zinc concentrators/ smelter in Butte resulted in the production of a variety of mill and smelter wastes including particulates, aerial emissions and tailings. The long period of mining in Butte left the landscape littered with no vegetation or sparsely vegetated mine wastes, often containing hazardous concentrations of metals and arsenic. These wastes represent significant sources of environmental contamination to Silver Bow Creek and posed human health risks and risks to the environment.

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- Groundwater, surface water and soils are contaminated with arsenic and other heavy metals, including copper, zinc, cadmium and lead. Silver Bow Creek and the Clark Fork River contain metals from the cities of Butte to Milltown. The tailings, dispersed along the creek and river, severely limit aquatic life forms and have caused fish kills in the river. Potential health threats include direct contact with and ingestion of contaminated soil, surface water, groundwater or inhaling contaminated air.
- The Butte Priority Soils Operable Unit is a very complex site, with yard cleanups, extensive groundwater capture and treatment, stream bank reconstruction, and waste pile cleanup, including a Technical Impracticability ARARs Waiver for groundwater. EPA has completed capping over 470 acres of mine waste. Butte Silver Bow County Health Department has an on-going residential lead, mercury, and arsenic abatement program (RMAP) in the towns of Butte and Walkerville with over 1500 properties evaluated since inception of the EPA's 2006 Record of Decision for cleanup of Butte Soils includes the RMAP. There was one elevated blood lead level confirmed greater than 9.9 micrograms per deciliter and was determined to be caused by a non-environmental source of lead. Through cooperation with ARCO, the primary PRP for the site, the program uniquely addresses both lead from mine waste and lead based paint. The program also addresses dust in attics. Most homes in this area have elevated levels of lead, arsenic and mercury in the attic dust. Butte Silver Bow County Health Department has a program in place that cleans up the attic dust if there is a direct pathway of exposure to the living space with approximately 300 abated.
- Other Operable Units (OUs) within the Silver Bow Creek/Butte Area site are Streamside Tailings; Warm Springs Ponds (Active and Inactive areas); Rocker Timber Treating Plant, Mine Flooding/Berkeley Pit; Active Mine Area; and Westside Soils. All of these OUs, except for Westside Soils, have Record of Decisions in place under order or consent decree and are successfully implementing remedy. Westside Soils is scheduled for an RI/FS in 2011. Warm Springs Ponds RODs are interim RODs and will have to be re-evaluated for final ROD status.